No. 28

THE CHAPBOOK

Aug. 1922

(A MONTHLY MISCELLANY)

New Poems by Contemporary Poets

THE POETRY BOOKSHOP

35 DEVONSHIRE STREET, W.C.1

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SOME NEW POEMS
BY CONTEMPORARY POETS

THE CHAPBOOK
(A MONTHLY MISCELLANY)

Number 28 (Edited by Harold Monro) August, 1922

THE POETRY BOOKSHOP
35 Devonshire Street, London, W.C.1

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NOTE.—All MSS. receive careful consideration. Sometimes brief criticism is offered, but where they have not been accepted no further correspondence will be carried on regarding them.

(*Humbert Wolfe*)

Kensington Gardens

MORNING

IF all of us were doomed to die
when we had lived a minute
I think I know what Ann and I
would wish to happen in it.

We'd let our sixty seconds run
where chestnut-blossom hardens
some early morning at Kensington
when spring is in the Gardens.

THRUSHES

THE City Financier
walks in the Gardens
stiffly because of
his pride and his burdens.

The daisies looking
up observe
only a self-
respecting curve.

The thrushes only
see a flat
table-land
of shiny hat.

He looks importantly
about him,
while all the spring
goes on without him.

TULIP

CLEAN as a lady
cool as glass
fresh without fragrance
the tulip was.

The craftsman who carved her
of metal prayed
" Live, oh thou lovely " :
Half-metal she stayed.

THE BLACKBIRD

IN the far corner
close by the swings
every morning
a blackbird sings.

His bill's so yellow
his coat's so black
that he makes a fellow
whistle back.

Ann my daughter
thinks that he
sings for us two
especially.

LAMB

THE old bellwether
looked at the lamb
as a gentleman looks
when he mutters ' Damn ' . . .

" If you jump and frisk,
you little fool,
you'll only end
by losing your wool.

When I was a lamb
I always would
behave as like a sheep
as I could."

" Did you ! " the lamb
replied with a leap.
" I always thought
You were born a sheep."

The park-keeper said
to the boy on the fence :
" Let's have less
of your impudence.

Off with you, now,
and do as you're bad,
or you'll end in prison.—

When I was a lad . . ."

SPEKE

THE children play
at hide and seek
about the monument
to Speke.
And why should the dead
explorer mind
who has nothing to seek
and nothing to find ?

QUEEN VICTORIA

Queen Victoria's
statue is
the work of her
daughter Beatrice.
The shape's all wrong
and the crown don't fit,
but—bless her old heart !
she was proud of it.

THE ALBERT MEMORIAL

IN his heavy
monument
Good Prince Albert
sits all bent.
Even death
could not assuage
the burden of
his golden cage.

THE TRAMPS

THE tramps slink in at half-past four
in the sweet summer weather,
and stretch upon the grass and snore
peaceably all together.

They look like litter on the grass
and not like sleeping men
that life—the feaster—dropped and has
not tidied up again.

THE OLD LADY

THE old, old lady
that nobody knows
sits in the garden
shelter and sews.

Save for her restless
fingers she
is cold and still
as ivory.

The chestnut-blossom
blown on her dress
seems only a sculptor's
cleverness.

THE YOUNG MAN

ALWAYS at sunset
a young man comes
into Kensington Gardens
and twiddles his thumbs.

Alone in the Broad Walk
he sits and seems
as though he were moithered
'twixt waking and dreams.

He looks at the palace
between the trees
till you'd wonder what palace
it is that he sees.

He sits in the shadow
under the lime
and laughs when the children
ask him the time.

THE ATHEIST ORATOR

THE Atheist orator
in the dark
mistook the Gardens
for the Park.
The gates were closed,
but he climbed the wall
and began to preach
to no one at all,
(No one unless
you count the trees
where he was preaching
audiences).

Those lovely trees
grew lovelier
as he proved conclusively
no trees were.
Down poured the moon
on the great grace
of those green towers.
The small white face
shared the vast gift,
and drenched with light
his angry soul
shrilled in the night
(as the impartial
moonlight fell)
" Man needs no heaven,
and fears no Hell."

TAIL-PIECE

" Out ! All out ! "
Harsh echoes blow
from far. With wandering steps
and slow
once again their
garden leave
little Adam
little Eve.

(*R. J. Randerson*)

AT THE SPECIALIST

CIRCUMSTANCE, you multi-headed monster !
Doubtfully efficient cosmos of evolving, revolving cog-wheels !
Circumstance, I sometimes think
Had it not been obviously
Wiser to have restrained my kindest parents
From the careless procreation
Of another useless member of society ?
(Earth's over-populous ;
A fly-paper
Teeming-black with yearning, wailing victims.)

Or afterwards even
You might
By way of atonement
Have intervened
In childhood, boyhood, adolescence, youth
To make my body
Shapely and healthy
—Or anyway unbotched.

But howsoever human, grumbling's futile.
(Though, Circumstance, you caused me to complain)
Really I should give thanks for my survival
(Our un-Nietzschean civilisation !)
And my previous remarks are all contemptible—
Dear Jüng and Freud ! How I do loathe these circular cogitations !
Though it can never altogether be erased
The past can be always re-created.—
Then by Phospherine, Sanatogen, Wincarnis, Iron Jelloids,
Malt Extract, Eno's, Cinnamon and Quinine, and yes—
Fresh air, sleep, exercise, ape cunning or sheer Will,

By Müller !—and by Eustace Miles !
I'll keep this bundle of causes and effects,
My body,
Hanging together against dissolution
Half a century yet !

SILVER-BIRCHES

SWAYING . .
silver-birches
swaying . .
. . . .
Tressèd dryads
dreaming in noon's
dreaming . .
. . . .
Heartless are they, heartless, vainly
wooed by thee, swift-plumèd Zephyr,
shunning thy caress and slowly
swaying . .
. . . .
Swayed as thine embraces
set their fragile leafage
seething,
tremulous against June's high-arch'd sapphire
seething ;
and in leaf-tempered sun-waves
floating. .
dreaming . .
silver-birches
swaying . .
swaying . .
. . . .

TERRIBLE AS AN ARMY WITH BANNERS

(*Narcisse Wood*)

TERRIBLE, terrible is beauty in a bright, cruel land.
The sea, like eyes in a peacock's tail,
Stares sinister and bland.
And the hills, with the huge gesture
Of legendary kings
Hide cruelty in soft robes,
Bloomed like the blue butterfly's wings.
Though they break into rose-flower at evening,
Their flower is a barren rose.
The olive trees crouch trembling at their feet,
On their crowns no sweet thing grows.
The moon looking down on them mournfully,
Is a shield from sorrowful old wars,
And the black bitter spears of cypress
Menace the white army of stars.

SKETCHES FOR A PORTRAIT

SOMETIMES a youth, stepped from the Golden Age,
With cap a thought aslant, rose behind ear,
A cloak most debonair, lined peach or flame,
One slim hand to the hip ; lovelock on brow ;
A lovely, careless boy, the world his jest,
And every heart his quarry, yet disdainful . . .
Sometimes a jester, all achime with bells,
Striking swift sparks from that old granite, life,
With a wild bauble, while his haunted eyes
Belie the quips, the coloured points, the bells.
Sometimes a gallant, spangled Harlequin,
Knowing his sword a toy, his tinsel trash,
But laughing through his black mask's mimic gloom
With " Who cares for to-morrow ? Here's to-day ! "
And sometimes pale, fantastical Pierrot,
Moon-stricken poseur, tender-hearted child. . . .

(*L. A. G. Strong*)

THE BALLAD OF THE CARPENTERS

AN ancient woman met with me ;
Her voice was silver as her hair :
Her wild black eyes were certainly
The strangest I have seen.
She told a tale of carpenters
Who laboured for a queen.

" I had an island in a lake,
A wide lake, a quiet lake
Of sweet security.
I called them to me by the lake
And they came gladly for my sake,
My seven singing carpenters,
To build a house for me.

" They brought the hammers and the nails,
The pegs, the twine, the chisel blade,
The saw and whizzing plane.
They brought good share of timber wood,
Of resin wood, sweet smelling wood,
Split kindly to the grain.
They brought them all for love of me ;
They did not seek for gain.

" They built a house of singing wood,
The white wood, the splendid wood,
And made it snug around.
Their hammers on the ringing wood
Made all the lake resound.

" The tench stirred dimly in his dream,
The glowing carp, the silly bream
Could hear the muffled sound.

" But someone grudged the fragrant wood
And sent a storm upon my house,

A black flood, a silver flood
Of wind and stinging rain.
The waters writhed in hissing rage ;
The yelling wind, the rain-pocked waves
Rose in a hurricane.

" The slaty waves foamed hillock high,
The thunder pranced about the sky,
The lightning's bare and crooked fang
Gleamed where the cloud-lip curled.

" And when the calm came and the peace
Of wind's cease and waters' cease,
My house and seven carpenters
Had vanished from the world."

THE STRANGER

AS I sat drinking in " The Plume " last night,
A man came swinging in out of the rain,
Loosened his sodden jacket, and sat down
On a stool heavily. His rough, red face,
A day unshaven, was drawn in a stiff mask
Of rage and misery, and the little veins
That thread the corner of the white rolled eyes
Had burst, and filled his eyes with blood. Still silent
He sat there, with his whiskey-hot untouched,
Eyeing a calendar on the mottled wall
With dull red gaze : and once or twice he drew
His hard mouth to a harder line of rage,
And all his forehead corded. Suddenly
He drank his drink, and turned his gaze on me,
Leaned staring over, and in a low hoarse voice
He said " God damn all women who are cold,"
Drew his coat round, and strode into the rain.

(*Ianthe Jerrold*) MIDSUMMER NIGHT

(If on midsummer night a girl before going to bed places her shoes to form the shape of a T, she will see her future husband in her dreams.
Old Superstition.)

I set my shoes in the shape of a T,
Hoping my true love for to see.

WORN thin at soles and dusty-white
Wi' dancing all the hours to light,
Small shoes, I reckon you've done your part,
Carried light feet, but heavy heart.
For Dan I rubbed your buckles fine,
But Dan chose Hetty Valentine.
Ah, lads be fickler than the skies !
All for her eyes to-night his eyes ;
A white-faced girl, but she've a way
To make folks laugh at what she'll say,
Joyful and quick. Ah, Dan, it's told :
A witty maiden wed's a scold !

I danced wi' Jacob. He were proud
To flaunt me all among the crowd.
" My lass," he called me, and " My dear,"
Poor fool. I didn't hardly hear,
Nor hardly saw his prideful face ;
Nor hardly felt his arm's embrace.
It was like dancing with a ghost.
But Dan, Dan filled the room a'most ;
His voice came through the fiddler's air ;
His gay black eyes was everywhere.

Dear Lord, it's hard to be a maid,
To go heart-hidden, grow afraid. . . .
" There's Jacob, wishful for to wed.
Why won't you have him ? " mother said,
Her poor hands raking out the stove :

" If Jacob love, you'll come to love."
Her poor eyes weary wi' her lot,
She said it kind ; but—she've forgot.
She's fearful. Jacob's well to do.
I'm none so young. I'm twenty-two.

Dan, do you mind that holiday,
March winds tearing the skies away,
Up on the sodden heath we met,
Caring naught for the wind and wet ?
Drip, drip, the rain fell off the spray,
Seemed like my heart that dripped away.
" *The gorse bush blooms, and what's the reason ?*
To tell us kisses is in season."
Now is its summer bloom a sign
To court pale Hetty Valentine ?

The dawnlight's stealing up the skies.
Four hours, and then the hour to rise
For milking. Oh, I'll creep to bed,
Lose aching heart and feet and head,
And dream of Dan. But O ! but O !
If Jacob's doting face should show
Among the dreams, and never Dan's !

For sure that it'll serve me well,
A second time I'll say the spell :

I set my shoes in the shape of a T,
Hoping my true love for to see.

(*Ralph Laurence*)

AFTER LONG WARS

ONCE, in a city,
After long wars,
They hung their bright lanterns
To shine with the stars.

When warfare is ended,
Then laughter comes out—
They rode in delight
On a gay roundabout.

For, lo, in the palaces,
Trophies and charms
Were laid at their feet
By the triumph of arms !

But now in the city,
Long after war,
There are shadows and silence
Where the palaces are.

Time's stealthily thrusting
Within his grim bag,
Pewter and silver,
Satin and rag.

Silent the stones
In the gray palace-yard
Where Time slowly fumbles
For fragment and shard.

(*Ethel Talbot*) MRS. JONES THE DRESSMAKER

STRANGE !—as I sat to-day, one of a crowd
Of folk who talked unceasingly and loud,
I heard—as clearly as I heard their tones,—
A Voice from long ago,—of Mrs. Jones.

Poor Mrs. Jones, forgotten through long years,
Yet now,—our Stars p'rhaps hobnobbed in the Spheres,
For once again I felt the spell of her,—
Of tall old Mrs. Jones, the dress-maker.

Swooping, like some great bird she seemed to me,
Her room, a cage where she moved restlessly ;
So small a room, but there she always stays
In this my memory of bygone days.

Her hands, large, bony ; fingers, dry and cracked ;
Scarred with her anxious needle-work ; and blacked
With household tasks ; scant dress o'er scanty bones ;
So she appears again,—poor Mrs. Jones !

There are her china-dogs uncouthly hunched ;
Her " everlasting flowers " tightly bunched ;
I see them ; hear the gentle anxious hiss
In which she speaks of them to " little Miss."

That voice,—half-choked with pins, yet full of tears,—
It's spell can hold me after all these years ;
Still on my neck I feel the sudden shock
Of hard cold fingers as she shaped my frock.

Strange,—that her image should come back again,
Scarce called up once between to-day and then ;
Strange how that weary hissing voice still drones
Through all I do to-day,—poor Mrs. Jones !

(*H. Stuart*)

MARIE LOUISE

(A Fragment)

WE will suppose that the action takes place in the village of Albieri, where the Princess Marie Louise of France is to marry Phillipe, King of Spain. Marie Louise is sixteen ; full of a voluptuous grace rather than of definite beauty. Phillipe is small and pale, half an idiot, and with one leg much shorter than the other. The town in which a King of Spain was married became subject no longer to taxation, and consequently the meanest villages of the country were always selected for the ceremony. The French nurse of Marie Louise is seen in a room of the most respectable house of the village, though little more than a hovel. Without it is raining. She speaks to the Crown Princess, half-sister to Phillipe.

Nurse : We who have known the splendours of five Courts
Cannot resign ourselves without a struggle
To the little meannesses of a capital
Of twenty cottages in a ploughed field.

Crown Princess : Indeed, Madame, Versailles cannot surpass
The brilliance of Madrid ; what you see here
Is nothing ; pass it over without notice.

Nurse : I have been used to Paris and Vienna,
London, Stockholm, Copenhagen and
The most beautiful villages and towns in France.

Crown Princess : Here is the King !

Nurse : That damnable idiot !

Crown Princess : That was his father's fault.

The King : Indeed it was. (*Hiccoughs.*)

Nurse : Unhealthy, filthy vestige of a worm.

Crown Princess : Hush, Madame, Phillipe is so sensitive.

The King : I inherited my sensitiveness from my mother.

Nurse : She couldn't have been over-loved by the King,
Whoever the scoundrel was.

Crown Princess : You speak of our most holy father, the blessed Charles.

Nurse : Who was your mother, Princess ?

The King : O, she was an actress.

Crown Princess : Phillipe, be quiet, you have over-eaten !

Nurse : Unhealthy, filthy vestige of a worm.

The King : My father and my mother, and her mother ;
A noble gentleman and two comely ladies
Composed the Royal family, and Maria
Of Austria, my mother's cousin——

Nurse : Your silky voice is better hidden and
Those things are only to be remembered
By some fool of a poet writing a play
In a hundred years or two.

Crown Princess : Our family, Madame,
Formed one of the most exquisite and harmonious
Pieces of God's human architecture.

Nurse : Unhealthy and degenerate royal fools.

The King : Have we not listened to this woman long enough ?
Where is Louise ? I want her with a passion
That only kings are born to, and the poets
Half anticipate.

Nurse : The cupidity of kings, like that of goats,
Is the bounty of the creator of mankind.

Crown Princess : Madame, the King is very sensitive.

The King : A sensitive stomach and a sensitive heart.
I have been handled delicately by woman ;
Spoon-fed, in a way. A body so highly tuned
Makes smallest things ecstatic.
Hourly there passes through its royal veins
The passion Troy was burnt for.

Nurse : O, good Lord !
Infernal, carnal hypocrite ! Princess,
You listen to those blasphemous sentiments ?

Crown Princess : I find no blasphemy in the King's words.

Nurse : He speaks of Troy, of holy, antient Troy——
Proud, humble, godlike, demoniacal . . .
For I was Helen, her dust is on my eyelids.

The King : And who was Helen ?

Crown Princess : She means our mother's sister,
Helena, who was drowned before you were born.

The King : She dares to assert that she's the daughter
Of my mother's sister? (*Hiccoughs.*) This is too much.
Have the guard called.

Crown Princess : Be calm, excitement is so
Disagreeable to your constitution, Phillipe.

Nurse : I will call the Princess, and if she wishes it
On seeing such a worm whose very body
Defiles the spartan earth, let her come back
To Versailles and her cousin whom she loves.

Crown Princess : But this is treason.

The King : Imprison her ! Call the guard !
(*He tries to call but hiccoughs and is silent*)

Crown Princess : But where's her father Louis and Jean de Gascoigne ?

Nurse : Her father left her at the Pyrenees,
And Jean returned handcuffed, with twenty soldiers.

Crown Princess : The Duke? Handcuffed? You jest improperly.

Nurse : Madame, he tried to rape Marie Louise
In a dark forest. (*Exit*)

Crown Princess : Now, let us go, too.
We shall not stand on ceremony at cockcrow.
(*Exeunt*)

King's Jester : Here is a house in which all men are welcome
And woman more so.

Moorish Philosopher: I am more than a woman,
Being incarnate three times as a Princess,
And once, and herein lies my far-famed wisdom,

The mistress of one whose name, were I
to breathe it,
Would set the world ablaze with controversy.
You know the blessed name.

(*The jester crosses himself*)

King's Jester : I know the name.
Now, master, wait and I will bring you food.
You have most wisdom of any in this country ;
It's not a country of fools, O no, no, no.
You are intuitive beyond most women ;
You have the imagination of the poets ;
You are a very demi-god, I say.

Moorish Philosopher : He has a certain charm and is not so foolish
As many have imagined. He is full
Of an uncertain magic like a flame
Reflected in a pool. A kind of poetic
After-thought.

King's Jester : This is the food I've found for you.
It was hanging within the King's bedchamber
And on a piece of parchment there was
written :

(*He unfolds a label and reads*)

Many hands have clasped this thing :
From tower to tower their feet have trod
Settling lights upon the sky
Mid the clap of tail and wing.
Praise be given unto God.
Praise for this most earth-free thing.

Master, is this not food for the imagination ?

Moorish Philosopher : Give it to me.

(*He takes it and examines it carefully*)

" This is the Holy Torch of Ancient Spain."
It is, maybe, what I had once heard spoken of
And called by many names—The Flame of
Love,
And Red Desire, and whosoever light it
Is consumed for ever with the love of women.

Is it not the evil that for generations
Has smouldered in the heart of Spanish kings,
And lately filled the pale shell of their bodies
With a fire too devastating to be imprisoned
In such a little space ? Take it away.
It would be dangerous to meddle with it.

King's Jester : It's such a fine one it would be a pity
To hang it up again in that old corner.
It must always have been there, because the King
Brought nothing with him, nothing that I remember.

Moorish Philosopher : Do as I say, and leave it where you found it.
But no, I have a magical friend at Paris.
I will secrete it here (*opens his cloak*), and take it to him.
Maybe one of his curious arts will disclose
The meaning of the words that are attached to it.

King's Jester : And if the King should think of it and not find it,
How shall the loss of it be accounted for ?

Moorish Philosopher : It may be countenanced, or it may not,
For I've the curiosity of a mind
Much steeped in the mournful mysteries of creation.
Research not to be baffled by a king.

King's Jester : I have heard said the King too makes excursions
Into the country of the lecherous sun.

Moorish Philosopher : The moon, poor fool, is the only symbol of creation.

King's Jester : Why was it then, the Lady of the Sun, Therese . . .

Moorish Philosopher : I hear a sort of stir over our heads
And I will go lest evil should befall
Through being over-concerned in regal matters. . . .

(14) AUGUST.—*Aria da Capo :* A Play in One Act by Edna St. Vincent Millay. (Cover designs by Albert Rutherston.) 1s. 6d. net ; by post 1s. 8d.

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1921.

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